



REPORT CARD

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

JULY 2012

Interpreting the School Report Card

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Introduction

Wisconsin has a new school accountability system and new school report cards. These signal a new era of school accountability that honors the complex work of schools and focuses on making sure our students graduate ready for college and career. The report cards place a high value on integrating information used to tell the public how our schools are doing with information that gives practical guidance to schools on how to improve. In short, the system is designed to be both informative and useful.

In the new accountability system, schools will receive a report card each year. The report card will give the school's accountability score on a 0 to 100 scale and its associated accountability rating. There are five rating categories, and a school's rating will determine what level of support the school will receive, as depicted below.

<i>Accountability Rating Category</i>	<i>Level of Support</i>
Significantly Exceeds Expectations	Rewards and Replication
Exceeds Expectations	Rewards and Replication
Meets Expectations	Local Improvement Efforts
Meets Few Expectations	State Support
Fails to Meet Expectations	State Support

Underlying the accountability score is an accountability index comprised of multiple performance indicators that, when combined to produce the overall score, provide a balanced look at school performance. The report card not only provides the overall score and rating but brings the school's data related to all parts of the accountability index into one place.

Knowing how a school performed on different parts of the index can provide valuable insight into the school's strengths and weaknesses. It can also provide guidance on how to proceed with planning school improvements, especially in terms of steering further investigation of performance issues. Used in combination with other school data, the report card and the accountability index provide a foundation for school improvement planning and evaluation.

The Department of Public Instruction will produce two versions of each school report card, the basic School Report Card and a lengthier Technical Report Card. Both report cards include the same "page one," or summary page, but have different approaches to providing supplemental or detailed data. This guide concentrates on helping readers understand the School Report Card, although it is applicable to the Technical Report Card as well. The School Report card is meant for all audiences and is intended to serve the purposes already described. It provides basic accountability index data, and it also supplies additional, related student data that, while not directly contributing to the index score, may help inform conversations about specific aspects of school performance.

The Technical Report Card is intended for a more specialized audience that seeks a more detailed understanding of the index. It supplies additional data that fill in some of the steps of calculating scores for the various parts of the index. A companion piece to the Technical Report Card is the Technical Guide, which provides full details and walk-through guides for the calculations.

Overview of the Accountability Index

Wisconsin's school accountability system places schools into one of five rating categories based on the school's accountability score, which ranges from 0 to 100. Reflecting the balanced nature of Wisconsin's accountability index, the score incorporates indicators that measure school performance from a number of perspectives.

<i>Accountability Rating Category</i>	<i>Accountability Score Range</i>	
	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Significantly Exceeds Expectations	83.0	100.0
Exceeds Expectations	73.0	82.9
Meets Expectations	63.0	72.9
Meets Few Expectations	53.0	62.9
Fails to Meet Expectations	0.0	52.9

The school accountability score is made up of two major parts. The first major part is a set of four Priority Areas, each of which is scored on a 0 to 100 scale. A composite of those four scores serves as the base accountability score. The second major part is a set of three Student Engagement Indicators, each of which has a numeric statewide goal for expected performance. Failure to meet a Student Engagement goal results in a deduction from the base accountability score. Therefore, if a school meets all of the Student Engagement Indicators, its base score becomes its final accountability score. If a school fails to meet any Student Engagement goals, then its accountability score is the base score minus the applicable deductions.

Before turning to descriptions of the parts of the accountability index, a couple of parameters related to the data used in the index are worth noting.

Full Academic Year students. The index scores are calculated on the basis of full academic year students.

Minimum cell size. The minimum cell size for accountability measurements (i.e., the smallest number of students in a group for which a report card can show data) is 20. This is half the size that was applied under the old accountability system and ensures that as many students as possible are included in school performance results while still ensuring the privacy of the data. The third Priority Area, relating to closing performance gaps between groups of students, is especially affected by cell size requirements. A “supergroup” concept is applied to this Priority Area to enable many of the students belonging to groups of fewer than 20 to still be counted. This is explained in the section on that Priority Area.

Groups. A number of tables in the report card display performance data disaggregated by groups to enable comparisons relating to longstanding concerns about educational equity and success. These tables highlight students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students, and also students grouped by their racial/ethnic origins. Only in the case of the third Priority Area --Closing Gaps--is performance by group a direct factor in the index score. However, group data is presented throughout the report card to maintain a focus on student groups and to enrich discussions about school performance data.

Priority Areas

Like the school accountability score, each of the four Priority Areas uses a 100-point scale. This provides a consistent and simple way to examine and compare Priority Area scores. Some schools, notably high schools, because they only test students using the state assessment once, will not have a score for the second Priority Area, Student Growth.

Because schools vary in terms of which Priority Areas, and even components within Priority Areas, apply to them, to produce base accountability scores the Priority Area scores are averaged in a prescribed way that takes this variability into account. Appendix A illustrates the most common scenarios of how Priority Areas and their components build to a base accountability score.

Priority Area 1: Student Achievement

What is the purpose of this Priority Area?

The purpose of this Priority Area is to indicate how a school's students' level of knowledge and skills compares against state academic standards.

Briefly, what is being measured?

This measure is a composite of reading and mathematics performance level profiles for the "all students" group in the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS). The score is based on how a school's students are distributed across the four WSAS performance levels, and it takes three years worth of test data into account.

What can the report card data tell us?

Beyond a school-wide score for Student Achievement, the report card shows the distribution of students across the four WSAS performance levels for the most recent three years.

Schools can use these data to compare themselves against the state average and to see if the data reveal any short-term trend. They can use this information to help develop overall achievement goals to guide improvement efforts.

The data are also broken out by groups of students. Schools can size up the impact of group performance on overall school performance. They can identify particular groups of students who are having trouble or doing admirably well.

What goes into the calculation of the Priority Area score?

This section describes the basic logic of how the score for this Priority Area is calculated. For a complete description of the methodology, including walk-through steps, please refer to the Technical Report Card and the companion Technical Guide.

1. Scores for this area reflect how a school's students are distributed among the four performance levels of the WSAS. (Scores from both the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam and the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities are used.) Having more students at the upper performance levels results in a higher score.
2. Separate scores on a zero to 50-point scale are calculated for reading achievement and mathematics achievement. Each contributes half of the Priority Area score.
3. To reduce the impact of random year-to-year fluctuations, three sequential years of testing data are used.
4. The method for calculating each content area score is based on assigning points to each of the school's students in each of the three measured years according to the student's performance level in that year. A student is assigned no points for being at the Minimal Performance level, one-half point for being at the Basic level, one full point for Proficient, and one-and-a-half points for Advanced.
5. For each year, students' points are pooled to produce a school average. From those yearly averages, a three-year school average is calculated. The averaging processes used in the calculations give greater weight to more recent years' data and also damp down the effect on aggregated test data of year-to-year enrollment variability. The score for each content area reflects this three-year average.

Priority Area 2: Student Growth

What is the purpose of this Priority Area?

The purpose of this Priority Area is to give schools a single measure that summarizes how rapidly their students are gaining knowledge and skills from year to year. In contrast to Student Achievement, which is based on the levels of proficiency students have attained, Student Growth focuses on the pace of improvement in students' performance. Student Growth treats all improvement, regardless of a student's starting point, as a positive.

Briefly, what is being measured?

At the heart of this measure is a point system that rewards schools for students' progress toward higher performance levels from wherever they started. The point system also penalizes schools for students regressing toward performance below the proficient level.

The measure most rewards schools showing rapid upward movement and having many students who are progressing. Also, the measure rewards schools that are already doing well and are maintaining the high performance of their students.

Student Growth does not apply to high schools, because only one year of test results is available, which does not permit calculating growth. Also, this Priority Area only reflects the

progress of students taking the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam, because the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities scoring scale does not permit growth calculations. Through the Dynamic Learning Maps consortium, the DPI will be exploring the topic of measuring growth for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

What can the report card data tell us?

Measuring growth is an important complement to looking at student achievement when assessing school performance. How well students are learning is reflected both by their level of attainment and by their rate of improvement. A school's performance in one measure could be quite different than its performance in the other.

The report card also provides Student Growth data for groups of students. Schools can size up the impact of groups' growth performance on overall school growth performance. They can identify particular groups of students who are having trouble improving or improving quite rapidly.

What goes into the calculation of the Priority Area score?

This section describes the basic logic of how the score for this Priority Area is calculated. For a complete description of the methodology, including walk-through steps, please refer to the Technical Report Card and the companion Technical Guide.

1. The Student Growth measure provides a single score that characterizes the growth of a school's students, regardless of their starting performance levels. It takes into account decline as well as improvement in student performance.
2. A school's score reflects the degree to which its students are projected to move from their starting scale scores to higher (or lower) performance levels within a three year period. Students' starting scale scores are taken from the year prior to the current year of test results to enable growth to be projected. The results of these projections are captured in a point system, described in #5.
3. The projections are based on the Student Growth Percentile (SGP). A student's SGP describes their growth in terms of a comparison with other students with similar achievement histories. Once a student's SGP is calculated based on the prior year and current year's test results, it can be used to determine whether that rate of progress will take the student to a different performance level.
4. Student Growth consists of two components, reading and mathematics. Separate scores are calculated for each and then combined.
5. For each of the two subject areas, positive points are assigned to students with SGPs that put them on target to reach higher performance levels. One point is given for each level a student is expected to climb. Because of this, schools with many low-performing students still may do very well in this Priority Area if their students are improving rapidly. A single negative point is assigned to any student who began at or above the Proficient level and is on target to drop below the Proficient level. Students who are projected to remain at the same performance level are assigned a neutral, zero points.

(These last students are not explicitly shown in the report card Student Growth data tables.)

6. The points earned by a school's students are combined to produce a subject area growth score for the school. The formula for producing the score ensures that schools with high proportions of Advanced students receive credit for maintaining those students at that level.
7. The reading and mathematics growth scores are added together to produce the school's Student Growth score.

Priority Area 3: Closing Gaps

What is the purpose of this Priority Area?

The purpose of this Priority Area is to provide a measure that corresponds to the statewide goal of having all students improve while narrowing the achievement and graduation gaps that often separate different groups of students.

Briefly, what is being measured?

For this Priority Area, students with disabilities, English language learners, and low income students are compared against their complementary, comparison groups. A supergroup (a data grouping formed to meet the cell size requirement by combining at least two of the above three target groups that do not meet the requirement on their own) is used where applicable so that more schools with small group sizes are covered. For racial/ethnic groups, Black students, Hispanic students, Asian/Pacific Islander students, and American Indian students are compared against White students, the comparison group.

Schools get credit for raising test scores and graduation rates for target groups. If comparison groups decline in performance, however, the amount of credit for target group improvement is reduced. In essence, all progress for target groups is rewarded, regardless of the effect on gap sizes, but that gain can be reduced or negated by falling performance of comparison groups. As a result, this measure encourages school performance that lifts the performance of traditionally lagging groups and over the long run, if not immediately, will result in closing gaps.

What can the report card data tell us?

The acknowledged strength of the federal No Child Left Behind law is its emphasis on traditionally underserved, underperforming groups. This measure shows whether schools are succeeding in helping lagging groups catch up. It does not reward gap-closing that is due to declining performance of leading groups.

Closing Gaps helps to explain whether factors affecting improved teaching and learning are affecting all groups to the same degree.

What goes into the calculation of the Priority Area score?

This section describes the basic logic of how the score for this Priority Area is calculated. For a complete description of the methodology, including walk-through steps, please refer to the Technical Report Card and the companion Technical Guide.

A potential corollary of schools having larger, more diverse student populations is larger gaps between groups. The calculation method for this Priority Area keeps that potential inherent disadvantage of more diverse schools out of the score.

In practice, an effective school with a high performing comparison group will see its gaps narrowing as the performance of lagging groups improves, because of the inherent difficulty of raising the comparison group's already high performance. In contrast, less effective schools that start to do a better job may not see their gaps narrowing right away, because there is plenty of room for all groups to improve. This measure rewards both kinds of progress, recognizing that in the long run the result will be smaller gaps.

1. There are two components in the Closing Gaps Priority Area, Closing Achievement Gaps and Closing Graduation Gaps. If both apply to a school, each component score counts for half of the Priority Area score. If only one applies, the score for that component is the score for the Priority Area.
2. The calculations for each of the two components follow the same basic procedure: Change in performance (see below for description of how performance is measured for each component) from the previous year to the current year is measured for each target group. If the performance of a comparison group declined, the amount of change credited to the associated target group(s) is reduced. The average net change for the target groups is the basis for the score for the component. In these calculations, each group's performance carries the same weight, regardless of the number of students in each group.
3. For the Closing Achievement Gaps component, performance means achievement in reading and mathematics, measured in the same way as for the Student Achievement Priority Area, except that students are pooled by group and not the entire school.
4. For the Closing Graduation Gaps component, performance is measured by averaging the four-year and six-year cohort graduation rates. (Because Wisconsin began reporting cohort graduation rates in 2009-10 and rates from two years are needed to look at gaps, for the first year of this accountability system, only four-year cohort rates are available. In the second year, five-year cohort graduation rates will be averaged with four-year rates, and starting the third year, six-year rates will be averaged with four-year rates.)
5. "Supergroup" note: In many schools, group sizes may fall below the minimum of 20 needed to meet the cell size requirement. In these cases, the application of the "supergroup" concept with respect to students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students (the concept does not apply to racial/ethnic groups) may prevent the performance of such students from falling through the cracks. A supergroup is formed by combining any of the three groups with fewer than 20 members into one group for counting purposes. If the resulting supergroup has at least 20 members, then its performance results are included on the report card.

Priority Area 4: On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness

What is the purpose of this Priority Area?

The purpose of this Priority Area is to give schools an indication of how successfully students are achieving educational milestones that predict postsecondary readiness.

Briefly, what is being measured?

This Priority Area has two components. The first component is either a Graduation rate, for schools that graduate students, or an Attendance rate for other schools. The second is a set of measures that include third grade reading achievement, eighth grade mathematics achievement, and ACT participation and performance, as applicable to the school. The scores for these two components are added to produce the Priority Area score.

What can the report card data tell us?

Graduation rates, of course, measure a key education milestone. For schools that do not graduate students, attendance rates are used as a substitute indicator.

For Wisconsin students, third grade reading ability is linked to high school performance, graduation, and college enrollment. Eighth grade mathematics ability predicts success in high school mathematics. These are strong metrics for schools to monitor.

The ACT test is a widely used and trusted measure of readiness for beginning college studies.

In the future, other indicators may be incorporated into this Priority Area to enrich the metrics available for ascertaining whether students are on the right trajectory for postsecondary readiness.

What goes into the calculation of the Priority Area score?

This section describes the basic logic of how the score for this Priority Area is calculated. For a complete description of the methodology, including walk-through steps, please refer to the Technical Report Card and the companion Technical Guide.

1. Calculations for this Priority Area are based on an “all students” group.
2. Component 1: Graduation Rate or Attendance Rate.
 - a) For schools that graduate students, a Graduation Rate is used as the indicator. For other schools, an Attendance Rate is used instead as a stand-in. Graduation rates and attendance rates are highly correlated and have virtually identical distributions.
 - b) The Graduation Rate is the average of a school’s four-year and six-year cohort graduation rates. (Because Wisconsin began reporting cohort graduation rates in

2009-10, for the first year of this accountability system, a five-year cohort graduation rate will have to be used in place of a six-year rate.)

- c) The Attendance Rate is the number of days of student attendance divided by the total possible number of days of attendance.
- d) A school's performance on this component accounts for a fixed 20 percent of the base accountability score, regardless of whether, overall, three or four Priority Areas apply to the school.

3. Component 2: Other On-Track Measures.

- a) A school may have up to three 'Other On-Track' measures contributing to the score for this component: a third grade reading achievement indicator, an eighth grade mathematics achievement indicator, and a combined ACT participation and ACT performance indicator.
- b) Third grade reading achievement and eighth grade mathematics achievement are measured in the same way as in the Student Achievement Priority Area.
- c) A school's ACT Participation and Performance score is the average of five rates for twelfth-graders: the school's ACT participation rate and the college readiness rates for each of the four ACT subject areas.
- d) A school's composite score for this component accounts for a fixed five percent of the base accountability score, regardless of whether, overall, three or four Priority Areas apply to the school.

Student Engagement Indicators

These three performance areas are vital for measuring school effectiveness. Low test participation reduces the validity of any comparisons and conclusions that can be drawn from a school's assessment data. In other words, the validity of a high proficiency rate is compromised when not all students are tested; we cannot be confident that the proficiency rate is representative of how all students could perform. High absenteeism and dropout rates point to educational shortcomings of the most basic nature. Because of the fundamental significance of these three indicators, schools that fail to meet statewide goals marking acceptable performance will receive fixed deductions from the base accountability score they earned across the four Priority Areas.

1: Test Participation

Test participation is not an end in itself, of course, but is critical to measuring students' achievement and school performance. It is important from educational, policy, and equity perspectives to have schools testing all children.

To meet this student engagement indicator, schools must have a test participation rate of 95 percent or higher. All students, not just full academic year students, are counted in this calculation, and the calculation is based on three years of data.

2: Absenteeism

There is a direct correlation between pupil attendance and pupil success. Absenteeism undermines a school's efforts to educate students. School attendance already is factored into the On-Track Priority Area, but because of the dire effects of chronic absenteeism, a related student measure is used here.

Although this absenteeism indicator is related to school attendance, it differs from that familiar measure in significant ways. While school attendance rates measure days of school actually attended as a percentage of all possible days of attendance, the absenteeism rate relates to the percentage of a school's students whose absences exceed the threshold that is strongly associated with poor academic performance.

To meet this student engagement indicator, schools must have an absenteeism rate of no more than 13 percent.

3: Dropouts

Keeping students in school so that they can progress toward graduation is one of the highest priorities.

To meet this student engagement indicator, schools must have a dropout rate of no more than six percent.

Supplementary Report Card Data

In addition to the data figuring into or relating to the accountability index, the school report cards contain information on Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) trends. In addition, the Technical Report Card shows the school's Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs).

WSAS Trends

The WSAS trend tables provide a five-year, grade-specific history of the percent of a school's students who were at least proficient in reading and mathematics, as measured by the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) and the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities (WAA-SwD). These data are not used in accountability

index calculations. However, they are presented here because the start of the new accountability system coincides with another change related to gearing our efforts toward higher standards of college and career readiness: modifying the WKCE performance benchmarks to align with those used for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This change does not affect the WAA-SwD.

The impact of this systemic change is a significant reduction in the numbers and percentages of students who score at the WKCE's Proficient and Advanced levels statewide. However, applied retroactively to prior years' data, the benchmark changes do not dramatically alter WSAS trends. These tables show historical trends given the benchmark change and may provide additional context of interest to some readers.

Annual Measurable Objectives

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, the U. S. Department of Education requires states to set Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for schools to help drive annual improvement for all groups of students in reading, mathematics, and graduation. School performance on AMOs is not a factor in its accountability score or rating. AMO information is presented only in the Technical Report Card, not in the School Report Card.

The Department of Public Instruction has established AMOs using the 2010-11 proficiency rates (reflecting career- and college- ready performance benchmarks) of schools at the 90th percentile as a goal. All students and each subgroup will be expected to reach that goal within six years, making a minimum improvement of 1% each year.

Conclusion

The new school report card is the face of Wisconsin's new accountability system. The report card rates a school's performance and assigns it one of five accountability determinations, based on an accountability score that provides a balanced look at school effectiveness. The accountability index behind the score measures performance from multiple perspectives. These include student achievement, student growth, closing achievement gaps, and ensuring that students are on track to graduation and ready for postsecondary success. The accountability index and the report card itself are designed not only to provide the public with vital information about their schools but also to give schools practical, constructive direction for investigating performance issues and designing effective school improvement strategies.

While this guide has emphasized an understanding of the report card and the accountability index, Wisconsin's new accountability system also encompasses a strategy for delivering to schools the level of support they need to address performance issues. The overall goal of the accountability system is to help provide direction and support to Wisconsin schools so that all our students graduate college and career ready.

Appendix A. How Priority Area Scores Contribute to the Base Accountability Score

This table illustrates how Priority Areas and the components of Priority Areas are weighted to generate a school's base accountability score. Three typical scenarios are shown to illustrate how the multiple indicators in the accountability index apply differently to different types of schools. (A "-" indicates that a Priority Area or a component does not apply.)

Any fixed deductions resulting from not meeting Student Engagement goals are taken from the base accountability score to arrive at the school's accountability score and are not reflected here.

	Student Achievement		Student Growth		Closing Gaps			On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness				
	Reading Achievement	Mathematics Achievement	Reading Growth	Mathematics Growth	Reading Gaps	Mathematics Gaps	Graduation Gaps	Attendance	Graduation	ACT Participation & Performance	3 rd Grade Reading	8 th Grade Mathematics
Typical Elementary School	25%		25%		25%			25%				
	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	-	20.0%	-	-	5.0%	-
Typical Middle School	25%		25%		25%			25%				
	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	-	20.0%	-	-	-	5.0%
Typical High School	37.5%		-		37.5%			25%				
	18.75%	18.75%	-	-	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	-	20.0%	5.0%	-	-